



# BO TALES

Vol. 9 No. 2

The Newsletter of the Original Hobo Nickel Society, Inc.

Apr/May/June 2000

## Sam Alfano, Engraver

RM# 594

Sam Alfano began engraving in the early '70's with a set of engraving tools purchased from a mail order catalog. He experimented with engraving on and off for a few years, but didn't get serious about the craft until 1979. The few engravers he'd met were unwilling to share their knowledge of tool sharpening, engraving technique, etc., and the learning was a slow process.

In 1982, Stanley Diefenthal, of the famed New Orleans Arms Co., hired Sam on a full time basis to engrave guns in his personal collection. Since engraver Lynton

McKenzie had worked there for many years, Diefenthal brought McKenzie in to train Sam. For the first time, Sam was afforded the opportunity of professional instruction, not to mention studying under one of the world's great engravers, and assumed McKenzie's place at the engraving bench at New Orleans Arms Co.

In 1984, Sam traveled to Brescia, Italy to study techniques of banknote or "bulino" engraving from the great Firmo Fracassi. Few people outside of Brescia knew Fracassi's technique for rendering

such beautiful and photorealistic engraved scenes in steel, and Sam learned from the master of this style of art. He continued to work for New Orleans Arms Co. until 1989 when Diefenthal passed away.



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### MODERN HOBO NICKELS

We are in an exciting time now, with several new hobo nickel makers appearing on

the scene in the past nine months. Carvers such as Cinco de Arturo and Arthur Hutchison (featured last time in *Bo Tales*) are making nice pieces. Arthur has improved his carving talents greatly this year, and is making nice cam-eos and reverse carvings that are selling well on ebay.

But Sam Alfano, a master engraver, has turned his tremendous talent to hobo nickels, and is making spectacular modern pieces. Check out his work on his web page, [www.hobonickel.net](http://www.hobonickel.net). You will be amazed by his astounding, mind-boggling artwork. Sam also shows step-by-step scans of the creation of one of his nickels. His works are selling on ebay for about \$300 to \$800 apiece. His talent is on par with Ron Landis.

With the success on ebay by Cinco, Arthur, and Sam, other hobo nickel makers (such as "Watty", "Billzach", "Brady" and Harold Jenkins) with limited artistic talent, have come out of the woodwork and are selling their nickels on ebay.

The following is one collector's opinion (mine) on the quality of workmanship of the many modern and current hobo nickel makers. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the best, on down to 1 being crude graffiti), here is my ranking:

- Ron Landis and Sam Alfano - 10
- Cinco de Arturo - 8
- Sonny Carpenter - 7
- Arthur Hutchison - 6 (and rising)
- John Dorusa and Frank Brazzell - 4
- J. Allen - 3
- Others (Billzach, Watty, etc) - 3 and lower

### OHNS LIBRARIAN NEEDED

I believe it would be a great benefit to members to have an OHNS lending library. The library would contain books on hobo nickels and hoboes, back issues of *Bo Tales* and OHNS auction catalogues, cassettes and CDs of hobo music and songs, and videos of movies and documentaries on hoboes.

But first we need a member to be our librarian, to house, sort, catalogue and shelf the material (won't be much at first), and mail books, etc. out to members and keep track of everything loaned out. Any member wishing to volunteer, please contact me (Steve Alpert, Box 66331, Los Angeles, CA 90066; email: [spalpert@flash.net](mailto:spalpert@flash.net)). The Board will select a Librarian from among the volunteers. Then we'll have a call for donations to our library.

By the way, in the early 1990s, PBS television ran an hour documentary on hoboes and the Britt convention. It featured hobo songs sung by Steve Anderson. I especially liked the song "I've Been Everywhere." Does anyone know of the availability of this song, preferably sung by Anderson?

### WEST COAST OHNS MEETINGS

We will have an informal OHNS meeting once a year in California, at the June Long Beach Coin Expo (on Saturday), for our west coast members and others attending the coin show. Unfortunately this message is too late for this year's meeting, which featured Bill Fivaz's introductory hobo nickel slide show with narration.

### OHNS WEB SITE

OHNS has reserved a website for our organization. It is "[www.hobonickels.org](http://www.hobonickels.org)".

The site is not operational yet. Some members have obtained sites with similar names. If you have a web site devoted to hobo nickels, let us know, and we will list them next issue. Eventually, most or all can be connected by links.

Steve "The Big One" Alpert

## NEW! CLASSIFIED ADS!

A free (for now) classified ad section (for members only) is being added as a regular feature of *Bo Tales*, for members to sell, buy, or trade old and new hobo nickels, books, back issues, etc. Ads could be sent directly to the Editor at:

Roman Luzecky  
5 Melody Lane  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002



**Sam Alfano...** continued from page 1

Once on his own, Sam focused his attention on the engraving of fine, handmade knives. At the time, few engravers were producing exhibition grade engraving on custom knives.

Sam has continued to work on custom knives, catering to advanced collectors in many countries, and has produced some of the finest engraved pieces made. He is best known for his intricate designs, precise detail, and flawless execution of this demanding art form, and his work has been featured in books and magazines around the world. He is also an accomplished musician, photographer, graphics artist, and a member of Mensa.

**HOBO NICKELS**

In April of 2000, Sam stumbled upon a hobo nickel listed on eBay. He was captivated by this unique art form and decided to carve one. This first nickel was Elmo Thibideaux, a cajun fisherman from south Louisiana. As he refined his technique, more carvings came to pass, including some with inlaid 24 karat gold and a hiking hobo with inset diamond in his bindle stick. Says Sam: "My goal is to create original designs which are executed with the extreme precision that I use when creating world class engraved knives and firearms." You can see more of Sam's work at [www.HoboNickel.NET](http://www.HoboNickel.NET) and [www.MasterEngraver.com](http://www.MasterEngraver.com).

The following sequence of photos show's how Sam carves a hobo nickel from beginning to end.

**STEP ONE**

Many hobo nickels utilize the nose, eye, chin, etc., of the indian. Since this design is a child's face, the indian's facial



features are too large and located in the wrong places. I epoxied the nickel to a wooden block, lightly sketched out the face with a marker, outlined it with a graver, and then began smoothing out the indian which gives me a better "canvas" to work on. The metal outside the face was then removed with a flat graver. At this point I have a pretty clear image of what's to come, and you can still see traces of the original indian's profile.

**STEP TWO**

Relieving the background is a slow, difficult process. In this photo, most of the waste is re-



moved with a square graver which incises a "V" groove. Multiple cuts gradually excavate the area, all the while being careful not to plow into the design or slip and go into the border. The background becomes a series of hills and valleys as each chisel cut removes another hill.

**STEP THREE**

Once the bulk of the waste is removed with the square graver, a flat graver is used



to achieve a level surface. The outside edges of the portrait and the inside edges of the border are re-cut to form sharp, vertical walls.

**STEP FOUR**

At this point I begin sculpting the facial features with square, round, and flat gravers, and the portrait is shaped with small abrasive stones and sandpaper. The hat has been shaped with flat gravers, and the area around the

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Sam Alfano... continued from page 1



neck, collar, and ear has been shaved to create a raised design. One of the problems associated with hobo nickels is having to remove enough material to eliminate portions of the original design. The high parts are not the problem. It's the lower areas of the original design that must be removed if they interfere with the new design. Much material must be removed just to get down to the clean metal below, and then the surrounding metal shaped and sculpted to make it look like nothing was ever there.

#### STEP FIVE

The hat and face have been smoothed and sculpted hair is then engraved. Each lock of hair is actually raised.



#### STEP SIX

The portrait continues to receive refinement with both graver and careful hand polishing. A chisel is driven under the edge of the ear which lifts it up and creates a nicely rounded interior. Round gravers work the inside of the ear a bit more, and a single point punch is used to matte the background around the portrait (the upper right portion is unfinished).



#### STEP SEVEN

Continuing to refine facial features with polishing and graver work, the design is nearing completion. The hatband detail is now engraved and the collar area is prepared for detailing and signing and dating.

#### FINISHED CARVING

Some fine line work in the hat, a running scroll design on the collar, a little graver work around the coin's date to sharpen it, and another round of background texturing with a sharper point, and Elf Boy is complete. Thanks for taking the time to view this series of steps in creating a hobo nickel!





## World's Fair Bound

In the early spring of 1933, Leo Meadows (my cousin) and I were both out of work and finding a job was very difficult at that time.

The Worlds Fair was opening in Chicago, Illinois at that time so Leo and I decided to catch a freight train and hobo to Chicago. We packed a few clothes and other belongings in a sack that had straps to fit around our neck leaving both hands free to catch the passing train. We went to the freight yards at Broyles to catch a northbound freight to start our adventure. There was one pulling out and a fellow sitting in the doorway of a box car gave us a helping hand in getting on. In all my travels I can't remember ever seeing a boxcar that was not sealed that had anything inside. This car had automobile tires and sealed boxes in it. The fellow was eating some Pangburns candy, I guess that he had opened one of the boxes. He offered us some candy and we accepted but I told Leo that we would get off the first time the freight slowed to a reasonable speed for us to unload. The train slowed coming into Decatur, Alabama, so Leo and I got out of that car and caught the next freight going north.

From Decatur to Indiana the trip was uneventful. We arrived in Indianapolis about two days prior to the running of the Indianapolis 500 race. The Salvation Army, various churches and other organizations were furnishing beds and places to stay to transients so we checked into a church that had a very nice living area with beds, showers, etc., in the basement.

We decided to remain in India-

napolis until the running of the 500. We went to the track where someone had pulled a couple or three panels off the fence where a person could squeeze through. When we got inside the fence we found ourselves on the backstretch of the racecourse. We were at the same level as the race-track so we could only see the cars as they came out of the south turn down the straightaway into the north turn. To keep watching these cars do this for about two hours our necks began to hurt from twisting it from left to right following cars going by so fast.

We decided to leave. There was a golf course just east of the track and we laid down on one of the greens until our necks became normal again. Before we got back to the church we decided that we would stop at a few houses and see if we could bum up a little change. We knocked on one door and asked the lady if she could spare us 10 or 15 cents to get a loaf of bread. She invited us in and sat us down and started parading girls in front of us and asking us which one we wanted. We had picked a house of ill repute and we told the lady we were really broke and needed the small change to get by. The girls took up a collection and I think we left with about 40 or 50 cents. The next morning Leo said he was homesick and wanted to go home.

Leo confessed that his mother had given him \$2.50 before we left home and that he would pay our way into a show if we would go home. The show was called a burlesque show. I remember one of the songs was *UP A LAZY RIVER IN THE NOONDAY SUN*.

After the show I told Leo that it would be a shame for us to go back home now since we were so close to Chicago. He agreed. We caught a freight and headed for Chicago. After some time we saw electric cables like those used for streetcars and trolleys. We thought we were close to the fair grounds so we got off the train and went into a culvert that was under the railroad to change clothes and tidy ourselves as best we could. While under there a uniformed policeman came under there and questioned us. We explained to him our mission and why we were under the railroad. He said we had better go down to the station with him and that we were still 30 miles from Chicago. We told the chief our story and he said that it would be best for us to remain in his jail for the night. He called his wife and told her about us and she brought two pillows and some magazines to the station for us to read. The chief told us he is going towards Chicago the next morning and he would carry us as far as he was going. The next morning the Chief carried us about 20 miles and let us out and we could see overhead cables and the Chief said that trolleys were that far out and we could catch them to the fair. We caught a trolley and after one transfer we got off near the fair. We went into a small restaurant near the entrance to the fair and asked the proprietors if we could leave our travel bags there and he agreed. The entrance to the fair was at the bottom of a ramp that went over a street and you could see some

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## World's Fair...

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of the buildings inside the fair grounds from the top of the ramp. Looking down at the entrance we saw that someone had placed three milk crates where one could climb over the fence using the milk crates. I told Leo to go down and climb the fence and meet me at a building that had a tractor ad on it. He went down to the milk crates and kept standing there for some time and in a while he came back up and said that he had something in his eye and for me to go down and climb the fence and he would come down later and meet me in the tractor building.

There was a small train with open cars that had benches back to back. When the little train stopped for me I got on a car and sat down on one of the benches. The American Legion or some other organization that was wearing chapeaux were apparently being used as security. One of them saw me so he blew his whistle and motioned for me to get off the train. I looked around the tractor building and waited for Leo for about two hours so I got worried about him and went back out of the fair to the restaurant and asked if he had been back in there. They said "no". When the restaurant closed around 11:00 PM. I went on this street and there were racks or boxes that were used for newspaper business. I crawled into one of those but the wind off the lake was keeping me cold so I went down to the train station and tried to sleep. About the time I shut my eyes there would be a security fellow to wake me and say, "you can't sleep here". This went on and I would move from

one part of the station to another until about 8:00 that morning. I went back to the restaurant and asked if my partner had been in and they said "no". About 9:00 AM Leo walked in did I jump on him and asked what had happened" He said he had gotten too scared to climb the fence after a few tries so he paid his way into the fair and could not find the tractor building that

we could see from the top of the ramp. He said he went into a show and purchased a beer and nursed it until morning while watching the show.

I hated that we missed the fair but I thought it better we start for home. We caught a freight and was in a flat car with 12 or 14 other hobos. The car we were in apparently had a flat spot on one of the wheels because there was considerable vibration in the car. Some of the hobos were asleep and the wallet of one of them slipped out of his pocket and laying on the floor of the car. I woke him up and showed him his wallet. He was very appreciative. As the freight pulled into Kankakee, Illinois this fellow said lets get off and eat. We explained to him that we did not have any money. He said he would treat us as I had saved his money by waking him up when his wallet slipped out of his pocket. We introduced ourselves to each other at this time and entered a fancy restaurant and eat a very good meal. As we were leaving the restaurant a policeman stopped us and said that we were three kids that had run away from home and we would have to go to the

station with him. The fellow was Ernie Mintern from Elgin, Illinois. We were able to convince the clerk at the police station that we were not the three runaways that they were looking for. They said they would keep us overnight. Ernie told the clerk that a train would be leaving and demanded that we be let out of the jail in time to catch the freight. Leo and I were not used to talking rough to policemen being from the South and we were afraid to do it but Ernie was upset about being put in jail.

They kept the cell doors unlocked until about 4 A.M. and then came down and locked them causing us to miss the early morning freight. Ernie had some choice words for them. We caught a freight about 1:00 P.M. When we got to Nashville Ernie asked to get off and eat again. We did and had a hearty meal and Ernie paid again.

Ernie said he wanted to tour the South so when Leo and I got off in Birmingham we agreed to keep in touch and wished luck on his tour. After he returned home we corresponded for several years but finally quit.

In the late sixties Kat my wife and I visited two of her brothers in Chicago so as I had Ernie's telephone number I called him and told him I was in Chicago. He invited us to come and eat Sunday lunch with his family. We met his family and we had something in common. His daughter was a stewardess on one of the airlines and I was an air traffic control specialist with the CAA now known

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**World's Fair...**

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as the FAA. Ernie's wife put on a scrumptious meal and we reminisced and talked about our trip and had a wonderful time there. We corresponded with each other again but after a few years quit again. I found out that Ernie owned two meat-markets and was on the City Council of Elgin. So it goes to show that hobos after a person marries and has children that the urge to travel is still there but a hobo had better settle down and get a job where he can pay rent, buy groceries and run a household.

As I still I have Ernie's telephone number I called about December 1, 1999 and talked to Mrs. Mintern and she informed me that Ernie passed away in 1994 with a massive heart attack.

I am 88 years old now and had cancer of the prostate and cancer of the lungs and my "air compressor" does not work and I tire out very easily.

By Paul Meadows  
Northport, AL

**Bo Tales Publishing Schedule**

<u>Issue Date</u>	<u>Deadline for Submitting Articles</u>
July/Aug/Sept	September 15
FUN Auction Cat.	October 15
Jan/Feb/March	February 28
April/May/June	April 30

The publishing schedule is based on getting sufficient articles for publication. Please submit your articles as soon as you can to:

Roman Luzucky  
5 Melody Lane  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002-1526

**The Sidedoor Pullman Blues**

*By Kenn Schofield*

Gonna write a letter to the rail officials  
Puttin' in a kick about this terrible train  
If they can't put cushions in their side door pullmans  
I ain't a gonna ride their doggoned line again.

When I climbed aboard this hot shot special  
Reckon I was wearin' my rambling shoes  
Now I'm a thinkin' all I got left is  
What I call my side door pullman blues.

The rattle and prattle of a downhill journey  
The jiggle and the wiggle likes to cook my goose  
The old engineer seems to like to feel her shiver  
When he cuts that old locomotive loose.

The clargin' and the bangin' of a flat wheel box car  
As the old engineer throws on his brakes  
If you look out the door you get an eye full of cinders  
And cuss the fireman for cleaning his grates.

This blasted boxcar is rockin' like a cradle  
And the freight train whistle is my lullaby  
But I can't go to sleep and I know darn well  
If this ride don't kill me I'll live 'til I die.

*Submitted by Roy Henderson, RM#153. Mr. Schofield is a friend of Roy's. This poem is printed with his permission.*



# H OBO ODGEPODGE

by Stephen P. Alpert, OHNS LM-10

## INTRODUCING "FLAT NOSE"

Like "Peanut Ear", "Flat Nose" is another prolific early maker of hobo nickels. His works have a distinctive appearance (Figures 1, 2, 3). The diagnostic characteristics of a hobo nickel by "Flat Nose" are:

- 1) The nose is flattened. Not in profile, but the surface we can see. The flatness (in elevation) may be the entire nose or just the tip.
- 2) The nostril is enlarged. It may be circular or elongate.
- 3) The derby hat has a thin curved brim. The front of the brim commonly touches the "L" of Liberty.
- 4) The hat band has a distinctive simple three-part bow in the center. The bow may be rounded and project upward above the rest of the hat band.
- 5) The hat is punched. It has a delicate and realistic texture.
- 6) The hair may extend outward in the rear, under the hat brim; and also forward along the forehead below the hat brim.
- 7) There are crow's feet wrinkles at the eye.
- 8) The collar is simple and



Figure 1



Figure 2

formed by two usually curved and parallel grooves.

9) "Flat Nose" carvings are usually found on nickels dated 1913 to 1915.

10) The ear varies in appearance.



Figure 3

Another nice example of a "Flat Nose" hobo nickel is lot 17 of the August 1996 OHNS auction. Lot 20 of the same sale could be another "Flat Nose" but is inferior in quality. On some "Flat Nose" nickels, he didn't do as nice a job dressing the field behind the neck or removing the braid.

## CUT-OUT HOBO NICKELS

Note Figure 3. On this "Flat Nose" piece, the field is cut out in front of and behind the head, leaving the head hanging in the center. This is the only example of a cut-out, hanging-head hobo nickel I am aware of. There is a solder mound on the center of the reverse, where a stickpin was once attached.



Figure 4

In a 1996 collectibles auction catalogue, a hobo nickel stickpin was offered (Figure 4). It consists of just the cut-out head of the hobo nickel (no border or rim; below average quality) with a stickpin attached on the reverse.

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## Hobo Hodgepodge...

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## A TWO-SIDED JEFFERSON HOBO NICKEL

Old alterations on Jefferson nickels are seldom encountered. And this totally carved two-sided piece (Figure 5) is even more unusual. The wording on the obverse was removed.

A small derby (resembling a flying saucer) was engraved on Jefferson's head. Also added are eyeglasses; a small mustache; a small cigar stub in his mouth, with rising smoke; a goatee; an earring; and a jeweled pin in front of his tall collar which is also slightly enhanced. The nose was rounded, and the ponytail was made fainter.

On the reverse, a flag was added atop the building. Below the building, Monticello is altered to Mont Cell (the "l" still faintly visible). And below that, FIVE CENTS was nicely changed to "1 CENT".



Figure 5

## THE FLYING HOBO

Yes, a flying hobo! That's what's depicted on a special air mail rubber-stamped cachet that was applied to outgoing mail from Hobo Hot Springs, Calif., only from May 15 to 22, 1938. This was National Air Mail

Week, and that week the mail from the mountainous Hobo Hot Springs area went out by plane.

Pictured on the cachet (Figure 6) is a flying winged hobo, with his legs bent back at the knees. He is holding a sign reading "From Hobo Hot Springs, Calif." The words "Air Mail Week" also appear on the cachet. The wings of the hobo resemble mountain peaks in the distance.

Also illustrated (Figure 7) is a Hobo Hot Springs sticker (2 by 1.5 inches, orange on white) picturing a hobo bathing in the hot springs. It is on a 1945 postal cover. This is sticker 26, of a set on post offices with unusual or humorous names. These were issued for stamp, cover, and postmark collectors, to attach to an envelope and then send it to that post office to be postmarked and mailed back.



Figure 6



Figure 7



## Remembering the railroad hobo jungles of Baraboo

By Verne Goodenough

How well I remember the railroad hobo jungles of Baraboo.

That time period was rather short, mainly during the first half of the last century.

As our story begins, I was just a little teen-age boy living near the then busy railroad yards of Baraboo. My father worked there, and later in life, I worked there, also. Therefore I had considerable contact with our so-called "box car tourists" for quite a number of years.

The location of our story took place in the southeast corner of Baraboo. There, under the railroad tracks was a huge culvert, built during the 1880s, when the railroad first came to Sauk County.

It was constructed of huge quarried sandstone blocks, and was built to last for centuries. Only an earthquake could harm it. The water channel under it was so large one could drive a large truck right through it. This was the location of the hobo jungle of Baraboo.

A little spring-fed brook ran right down through the center of this rustic old monument of stone and history. It made faint sweet music as it went babbling along.

The hobos, or bums, as they were called, were really vagabond people. They traveled all over the country, using boxcars as a means of free transportation, and a place to sleep. They stopped at old railroad towns like Baraboo to eat, rest and communicate with each other.

When these people left their train, the first desire of the day was usu-

ally to find food. They usually went around to private homes and requested food. Soon their pockets were bulging with sandwiches and a wide assortment of other food items. Sometimes they requested a dash of coffee also, often they headed for the hobo jungles of Baraboo to join others of their clan.

These jungles, so to speak, were quite easy for any hobo to find. The route there was usually quite well marked with their coded sign work along the way.

Upon arrival at the camp, it was easy to find pots, pans, dishes, etc., in the brush nearby.

This camp had a crude arrangement of stones which served as a stove to make coffee on. Usually a little wood was stashed away in a dry place.

Then it was indeed about time to eat. Their pockets usually produced enough food for each man, with some for trading with each other, or just sharing.

After this noontime meal, one man often produced a shabby old deck of cards and an enjoyable game followed.

As the people visited I heard countless stories of their past lives. Some stories were a little sad.

One rather refined looking young man told us that he used to be a doctor. He said he made some big mistakes, and then he was a bum.

Another told us that he used to have "lots of money," but he lost it all during the Depression, then he said he was "flat busted."

I thought these vagabonds were very mysterious, but I was never really afraid of them. For some strange reason I often felt that the names they called themselves were not always their real names. They wanted to remain strangers.

I have also noticed one big thing about these strange but interesting people.

I have never seen or met a lady hobo or bum. It seems to be a clan of people that was reserved for men only. I thought that rather strange. They were always quite nice to me.

After the war this clan of people seemed to just fade away, they just vanished. Or, did they really fade away or just vanish? I often wonder about that.

Or did most bums and hobos just alter their way of life? Are they still here, and we now call them "street people" instead of "bums?"

Actually, I like the original hobos and bums much more. They were much more interesting, and they seemed to have more spark and interest in life. Our street people of today just don't seem to have that interesting hobo quality of our boxcar tourist of yesteryear, in my opinion.

*This article first appeared in the News Republic. Reprinted with the author's permission. Baraboo is in Wisconsin. This article was provided by OHNS member Jon Stock, RM#190. Jon is a friend of Verne Goodenough.*



## ONCE A HOBO

### THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MONTE HOLM, A TRUE HOBO

*A book review by Bill Fivaz*

If you want to know how a hobo really lived and survived during the early and mid 1900s, you **must** read the above book by Monte Holm, the 85 year old "retired" hobo now living in Moses Lake, Washington.

Last September, OHNS member Ken Hill from Seattle sent me an article from the September 23, 1999 Seattle Post-Intelligencer on a gentleman now living in Moses Lake, WA who was a bonafide "knight-of-the road" in his early years and who now operates a junkyard/museum in that town in east-central Washington.

Monte Holm has also written an autobiography on his experiences, and it is undoubtedly the most poignant and revealing look at hoboing that I have ever read. It offers the reader a personal and nostalgic account of survival during the depression and once you've read it, you will have a brand new outlook on this important time in this country's history.

I strongly recommend that you read this 300-page hardcover book if you truly want to know the hunger, hardships and tribulations faced by so many men and women early in this century. The book may be ordered by sending \$25.00 (plus \$3.30 postage) to:

Monte Holm  
The House of Poverty  
P. O. Box 448  
Moses Lake, WA 98837

I guarantee you, you'll be glad you did!  
Bill Fivaz





## A 1910 HOBO CENT

by Bill "Zemo" Fivaz

While at a coin club meeting in upstate N.Y. a couple weeks ago when on vacation (point of reference: Can one be "on vacation" when retired?), I was able to purchase a really neat "Hobo Nickel" on a 1910 Lincoln Cent.

As you can see from the photo, the piece is very nicely carved, with accented coat lapels, deep cuts around the accentuated nose, a well-formed hat, and the subject, with a diamond stickpin in his collar, appears to be whistling.

It's also interesting in that the artist, when carving the upraised hand, apparently used the "1" and the "0" of the 1910 date to make it appear as a cufflink (or a handcuff!).

As we know by now, "hobo nickels" on U.S. coins other than the Buffalo Nickel are quite scarce, and when carved by a gifted artist as this one is, they're very popular.

Members: Why not take a lead from this little write-up on this coin and send me one of your recent purchases with the story behind it? We are always in need of material for BO TALES, and I'll take the photo for you at No Charge if you enclose a copy of your article. It doesn't have to be lengthy (this one sure isn't!), so let the other members enjoy items in your collection through this offer. Remember, "Sharing is Caring!"



## Promise yourself...

*...to be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.*

*...to talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet.*

*...to make all your friends feel that there is something in them.*

*...to look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.*

*...to think only of the best, work for only the best, and expect only the best.*

*...to be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.*

*...to forget mistakes of the past and press on to greater achievements of the future.*

*...to wear a cheerful countenance at all times, and give every living creature you meet a smile.*

*...to give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.*

*...to be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.*

- Author unknown



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## Hobo Railroad Map

The teenagers riding the rails during the Great Depression accounted for 1/16 (250,000) of a jobless army that numbered four million. These itinerants crisscrossed the U.S. on the Pennsylvania, Atchison, Great Northern, Union Pacific, and Southern Pacific railroads, as well as other vast rail networks.

In 1932, Southern Pacific agents ejected 683,457 trespassers from the company's trains. The price of trespassing on the rails was high: The Interstate Commerce Commission recorded 5,962 trespassers killed and injured in the first 10 months of 1932.

Reference Book information and map provided by Maryann Mellema RM# 181 and can be found on the internet at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh>.



## Rocket Hobo

In the January/February/March issue of *Bo Tales* there was an article on the earliest Hobo. If we can assume that this is the earliest known picture of a Hobo, we can conclude then that he was associated with sailing ships. We also know, and have much evidence, that Hobos were associated with the railroads. It would only be logical to assume that the next generation of Hobos in the new millennium would be associated with space.

I have found a patch that depicts a Rocket Hobo. The patch has a fuchsia border with the Hobo sitting in a red beach chair, under a green palm tree, beside a body of blue water. The hobo is viewing a rocket launch from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

If an OHNS member would like to add this patch to his/her collection the cost is \$3.50 plus shipping. You may call me at 321-861-0703 or fax me at 321-861-1434 to place your order. Please note that there is a limited supply.

J. Kimzie "Spike" Cowart, RM# 186



## CALL FOR AUCTION 2001 LOTS

The *Original Hobo Nickel Society* will have their annual auction of Hobo nickels and related material at the 2001 F.U.N. Convention in Orlando, FL on Saturday, January 6, 2001.

A call is now being made for consignment lots for this auction. All coin lots must be certified prior to submission, so please send them in now for certification if they already don't have papers. See the submission form in the back of each issue of *Bo Tales*.

As in the past, Modern pieces will be accepted at the auctioneer's discretion, as well as related material such as postcards with a hobo theme, special holders, satirical carvings, etc. Any non-coin lot, of course, does not have to be certified.

All lots must be in the auctioneer's hands by October 13, 2000.

This is necessary in order to ensure that all material is acceptable, categorized and prepared for the catalog. The auction catalog will be printed in November and in the member's hands early in December 2000.

We're looking for another record-setting auction, and we would be proud to have your consignment as a part of it.

Please send all lots to: Bill Fivaz, P. O. Box 888660, Dunwoody, GA 30356-0660. The earlier you get them in, the easier it is for the ol' auctioneer. Thanks.



## “ASK NICK

“Ask Nick” will be a regular Question and Answer column in *Bo Tales*. Please send in any questions you may have on any aspect of hobo nickels and related topics, and our mascot Nick O'Honis (with the assistance of OHNS officers and board members) will provide an answer (or answers).

Submit your questions for Nick to Steve Alpert, by mail (P.O. Box 66331, Los Angeles, CA 90066), fax (310-836-5691), or email (spalpert@flash.net). Since this is an introductory column, a few sample questions and answers are given below. (Initials indicate who is answering.)

### Dear Nick,

What feature of a hobo nickel is most diagnostic of a particular artist?

**Answer (SA):** It would generally be the ear. As the original coin does not have an ear to modify, it is up to the artist to create one. He has to select the size, shape, style, and position of the ear. And distinctive ears are easy to identify, such as those of “Bo”, or “Peanut Ear” (who made ears resembling a peanut).

### Dear Nick,

What percentage of all old original hobo nickels are nice enough to receive a Superior quality rating? [This is an actual question asked by a non-member.]

**Answer (SA):** Without doing any statistical study or research, I would guess that only about 3 percent of all the old hobo nickels that exist would qualify as Superior. A higher percentage probably occurs among all the hobo nickels Registered and auctioned by OHNS, as collectors tend to submit their better pieces to be authenticated and registered..

### Dear Nick,

Are carvings on coins other than buffalo nickels still considered to be “Hobo Nickels”?

**Answer (SA):** In the strictest sense, Hobo nickels are alterations on buffalo nickels. A looser definition would include works on other nickels (Liberty head and Jefferson), as they are nickels. But alterations to the bust on other coins are generally referred to as “hobo pennies”, “hobo dimes”, etc. Some carry this over to foreign coins (“hobo shillings”, etc.). But buffalo nickels are by far the most common type of altered coin.

### Dear Nick,

What is your best guess as to how many original hobo nickels were made from the teens through the 1950s?

**Answer #1 (BF):** There's no way of knowing for sure, as obviously no records were kept. But I think it's safe to say that tens of thousands were produced of various quality. I feel that probably 2-3% are currently in collectors' hands. The remaining pieces probably reside in places like Aunt Tilly's dresser drawer or grandma's attic trunk, as mementos of their hobo encounters. But the heirs would consider it a novelty item or conversation piece and probably not know of the hobo connection.

**Answer #2 (SA):** To me the 2-3% figure seems too low. Taking the possibly high figure of 100,000 hobo nickels having been made, 2-3% would yield only 2,000 to 3,000 hobo nickels. My guess is that there are at least 10,000 old hobo nickels currently in the hands of collectors and dealers. That would be about 10%. This percentage would increase if fewer than 100,000 old hobo nickels were made. So my guess is 10-20% of all those made are in collectors' hands.



Fred says he still has the following material ready to ship to any member who hasn't ordered yet. Also, the hobo tokens by Ron Landis are great additions to your collection... take advantage of their availability now and get a complete set.

- 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000 Hobo Tokens by Ron Landis \$10.00 each

\*The following back issues of BO TALES and Auction catalogues with prices realized are also available to members (number in parenthesis is the # of copies available). BO TALES issues are \$3.50 ea. and Auction Catalogues are \$4.00 ea.

#### ***Auction Catalogs***

Jan. 95 (20)

Jan. 96 (30)

Aug. 96 (20)

Jan. 97 (30)

Jan. 98 (150)

Jan. 00 (40)

#### ***Bo-Tales***

Fall 93(3)

Winter 93 (1)

April 94 (4)

Feb. 95 (2)

July 95 (20)

Dec. 95 (25)

April 96 (12)

Dec. 96 (12)

April 97 (25)

Aug. 97 (25)

Dec. 97 (15)

May 98 (15)

Jul/Aug/Sept 99 (5)

Order should be sent to: Fred Benson, 9862 Hawthorn Glen, Grosse Ile, MI 48138. Please make checks payable to OHNS!

**Photos of the available tokens are shown here to entice you!**



**1996**



**1996 Reverse**



**1999**



**1999 Reverse**



## 1999-2000 HOBO NICKEL TOKENS AVAILABLE!!

We have just received the latest in the series of OHNS Tokens made for the club by **Ron Landis**, of The Gallery Mint.

As you can see, Ron has the OHNS mascot "Nick" on the obverse of the new token and the old locomotive reverse. NEAT!!

You may order immediately (\$10.00 each) from **Fred Benson, 9862 Hawthorn Glen, Grosse Ile, MI 48138**. See elsewhere for tokens that are still available from previous years... Be sure your set is complete!



1999 - 2000 OHNS Nickel Reverse



1999 OHNS Nickel Obverse



2000 OHNS Nickel Obverse





# THE ORIGINAL HOBO NICKEL SOCIETY, INC.

P.O. BOX 38669 • COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80937



## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

- ☐ Please enroll me as a member in the Original Hobo Nickel Society, Inc. as indicated.
- ☐ Please renew my membership (member number \_\_\_\_\_) as indicated.
- ☐ 5 years @ \$40      ☐ 3 years @ \$25      ☐ 1 year @10  
☐ Life @ \$250      ☐ Youth under 19 @ \$5      ☐ Associate @ \$5 (no mailings)

I am also enclosing a donation of \_\_\_\_\_ for the OHNS Scholarship program.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Moniker (Nickname): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*I agree to abide by the Society's Code of Ethics.*

Signature of Candidate \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

## OHNS Advertisement Policy and Rates

- Prices quoted are for camera ready display copy.
- Graphic layout and design @ \$25 per hour is available.
- Pictures or graphics are encouraged.
- Payment in full must be submitted with ads. Make checks payable to: Original Hobo Nickel Society.
- All ads must be related to Hobo Nickels or associated materials or subject matter.
- Dealers must adhere to our Code of Ethics.

*Numismatic flyers can be inserted and mailed with Bo Tales for as little as \$150.*

	Annual -4 Publications	Single Issue - Bo Tales	Single - Auction Catalogue
Full Page	\$225.00	\$100.00	\$125.00
Full Page w/Cover	\$250.00	XX	XX
Half Page Ad	\$150.00	\$75.00	\$100.00
Quarter Page Ad	\$100.00	\$50.00	\$75.00
Inside Cover	XX	XX	\$175.00





## THE ORIGINAL HOBO NICKEL SOCIETY, INC.

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### HOBO NICKEL AUTHENTICATION SUBMISSION FORM

Submissions will be reviewed by at least two authenticators who will give independent opinions on the originality, type, method(s), artist, condition and quality of the carving. Each coin will be photographed and described. Carvings considered to be original (not modern) will be registered and numbered. **Please submit one form with each coin to one of the following authenticators:**

Bill Fivaz  
P.O. Box 888660  
Dunwoody, GA 30356-0660

Steve Alpert  
P.O. Box 66331  
Los Angeles, CA 90066

Owner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ OHNS Membership # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's value of coin (this information is necessary for insurance): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Members:** \$15.00 per coin\* **or** ten or more coins - \$12.50 per coin\* **Non-Members:** \$25.00 per coin\*

*\*Includes postage and insurance up to \$100.00. If you desire additional insurance, indicate the amount and include the additional cost.*

I understand that the opinions rendered are strictly that, opinions, and are not a guarantee that the item is genuine. It is however, the best considered judgement by qualified specialists in the area, but others may reach different conclusions.

☐ I authorize OHNS to use a photograph of this coin. ☐ I authorize OHNS to use my name (not address).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Submitter

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please make all checks payable to:  
Original Hobo Nickel Society



## You're Board (But We're Not!)

The Big One and

Chief Cook and Bottle Washer ..... Steve Alpert

Town Crier and Keeper of the Campfire ..... Archie Taylor

Head Scribbler ..... Jeff Daniher

Trouble Maker ..... Chuck "Buddha" Irwin

Bean Counter ..... James Taylor

Night Watch ..... James "Dictator" Taylor

Don "Sport" Farnsworth

Started-It-All ..... Del "Slickrock" Romines

Know-It-Alls (Authenticators) ..... Bill "Zemo" Fivaz

Don "Sport" Farnsworth

Dave "Willy" Wilson

Steve Alpert

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### Original Hobo Nickel Society, Inc.

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